

Public Library and Museum  
814 West Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee  
Milwaukee County  
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-270

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WIS  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. WIS-270

## PUBLIC LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Location: 814 West Wisconsin Avenue (north side of West Wisconsin Avenue from North Eighth to North Ninth Street), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Present Owner: City of Milwaukee

Present Occupant and Use: Central Library, Milwaukee Public Library System. Spaces in the west wing previously occupied by the Public Museum are currently being remodelled to accommodate various city offices and departments.

Statement of Significance: This stately Neo-Renaissance building was designed by the prominent Milwaukee architectural firm of Ferry and Clas, winners of a national competition for its design. Designated a Milwaukee Landmark in 1969, this building was conceived in the architectural climate created by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Still serving as the county's central library, the building remains one of Milwaukee's most monumental public structures.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1895-99. The city acquired the site, comprising lots purchased from Harvey Birchard, John Johnston, and John L. Mitchell, in 1890-92. Sponsored by the Joint Board of Trustees of the Public Library and Public Museum, an architectural competition was held in the fall of 1893, and the firm of Ferry and Clas was selected in early 1894. Prolonged contract negotiations ensued, with the architects finally agreeing to terms and commencing their work in the last weeks of 1894. In March 1895, they submitted plans and specifications to the board, who subsequently retained the noted Chicago architect Dankmar Adler of Adler & Sullivan to review drawings and written material. In her "Report" of October 1, 1895, librarian Theresa West states that Adler's comments, dated June 27, had generally been favorable, although he had "recommended certain changes for possible greater security." After further scrutiny by the Trustees and by the Board of Public Works, revised plans and specifications were approved, and advertisements for bids were published on August 31, 1895. Opening of the bids on September 27

proved to be a happy occasion for the Trustees as the low bid total was considerably less than anticipated. On October 3 the Sentinel declared that, "The work of excavation will be begun to-day or to-morrow...stone will probably be laid for the building within a few weeks." Construction seems to have proceeded relatively smoothly and was essentially complete by the fall of 1899. Expenditures during the period 1890-99, including outlays for lots, the competition, construction, finishing and decorating, furniture and equipment, and for the services of the architects, consultants, supervisors, and inspectors, totalled \$735,000.

2. Architects: George Bowman Ferry and Alfred C. Clas, Milwaukee. The firm of Ferry and Clas was in practice between 1890 and 1912. During this period they contributed many fine residential, commercial, and public buildings to Milwaukee. Besides the Public Library and Museum, these include the Steinmeyer Building (1893-1894), Northwestern National Insurance Company (1907), the Frederick Pabst mansion (1892), and the First Unitarian Church (1891-92). George Bowman Ferry (1851-1918) was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and received his education in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1872. He came to Milwaukee in 1881 and by 1890 was in partnership with Clas. Alfred C. Clas (1859-1936) was born in Sauk City, Wisconsin and received his architectural training through apprenticeships, both in Wisconsin and California (1879-1881). Upon his return to Milwaukee, he worked in the office of James Douglas and by 1890 he had entered into partnership with George B. Ferry. After their association ended in 1912, Clas worked with his son, Angelo, until 1921 and in other partnerships until his retirement in 1936. Clas died in 1942.

The Biography of Alfred C. Clas in the History of Milwaukee City and County, edited by William G. Bruce states: "During the course of this partnership they (Ferry and Clas) were awarded a gold medal on the Milwaukee Public Library and Museum at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, at the St. Louis Exposition, and at the Paris Exposition." Evidence does not support this statement. Ferry and Clas were not exhibitors at the Chicago Exposition of 1892-93. They did enter the Public Library and Museum at the Paris Exposition of 1900, but there is no evidence that they received an award. At the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 they exhibited photographs of the Public Library and Museum and the State Historical Society building. They did receive an award, but whether it was a gold medal and for which building has not been ascertained.

3. Original and subsequent owners: City of Milwaukee
4. Builders and suppliers: Ferry and Clas served as superintendents and were assisted by T. L. Coudron of the Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory, Ltd., appointed inspector of mill and shop work in December 1895, and, in all probability, by engineer Charles G. Armstrong, who supervised work on the electrical plant and inspected and tested the wiring. Records of the Board of Public Works name these contractors: Charles B. Roberts, Milwaukee, mason work (his contract evidently included excavating and construction of the foundations); Wisconsin Bridge & Iron Co., Milwaukee, structural steel and iron work and alterations and additions to basement air ducts; Henry Ferge, Milwaukee, carpenter work and finishing engine room (the carpenter contract had been awarded to Peter Clos of Milwaukee in October 1895, but early in 1896 he requested and received the Board's permission to assign his contract to Ferge); Fred Andres & Co., Milwaukee, cut stone and stone carving; Northwestern Terra Cotta Co., Chicago, terra cotta eagles; Winding & Gezelschap, Milwaukee, roofing; Empire Fire Proofing Co.; Louis D. Biersach (Biersach & Niedermeyer), Milwaukee, tin and copper work; William E. Goodman, Milwaukee, plumbing; Charles B. Kruse Heating Co., Milwaukee, steam heating system, ventilating system, electric light and power plant, and extra pipe work, including piping for book cleaning apparatus and Paul vacuum system; Rohn & Meyer, Milwaukee, electrical work, vault doors, and extension of telephone system; Peter L. Petersen, Milwaukee, painting and glazing; J. G. Wagner, Milwaukee, metal staircases, elevator cabs, enclosures, and metal work for book stacks; Philip Gross, Milwaukee, hardware; E. J. Roberts, Milwaukee, stucco, staff, and plaster work (all sub-contracted by Roberts in January 1897, to Lennox & Haldeman, Chicago), terra cotta dome roof, and stone wall on north side of building; Pickel Marble & Granite Co., St. Louis, Marble and mosaic work; William J. Crant (Grant Marble Co.), Milwaukee, mason and marble work for book stacks; Oxley & Enos Manufacturing Co., Brooklyn, gas and electric fixtures; Henry Vogt Machine Co., Louisville, electric elevator plants; Charles H. John (Wollaege Manufacturing Co.), Milwaukee, furniture and shelving; M. D. Ebert, cement sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and driveway; John C. Jones, Milwaukee, coal vault; Johnson Electric Service Co., Milwaukee, extra pipe work. To this list the W.P.A. report of 1939-40 adds the following: Northwestern Tile Co., cement driveway; Hoffmann & Baur, galvanized iron return

and dampers; Julius Lando, thermometers; C. Hennecke Co., umbrella stands; C. Muller & Son (possibly Mueller & Son Co.), Cambridge cans; Rundle-Spence Manufacturing Co., service pipe; A. Monsted & Co., coating walls with pitch; Water Department, branch connections; Daniel Coakley, filling, grading, and landscaping; Herman J. Irmer, moving and setting up old furniture; Milwaukee Gas Light Co., service pipe; Milwaukee Medical College, electrical current; and Stark Bros. Co., shades, carpets, and rugs. Finally, in Milwaukee Landmarks, Richard W. E. Perrin notes that the mosaic floors were executed by "skilled Italian tile setters who had recently settled in Milwaukee" and identifies one of the stonecarvers as the accomplished local artisan Frank Steven.

5. Original plans: The drawings entered by Ferry & Clas in the 1893 competition apparently have been lost, but luckily, three of them were reproduced in contemporary publications, the meticulous black and white perspective rendering in the Milwaukee Sentinel for November 16 and December 3, 1893, and January 5, 1894, and in the Milwaukee Journal for January 6, 1894, the perspective and two plans in the January 1894 issue of The Inland Architect and News Record. Of the original working drawings, it appears that only one survives: Sheet 456, Finish in Room 203, an exquisite ink drawing on linen tracing cloth now preserved at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, 311 Municipal Building. Two others--a detail of the central portion of the facade (south elevation) and a section through the rotunda and dome--were published in the 1895 volume A Book of the Office Work of Geo. B. Ferry and Alfred C. Clas Architects. Prints of both are among the thirty-six hand-colored sepia prints, a set comprising plans and elevations as well as several sections and a number of exterior and interior details, on file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings. These have been microfilmed and are listed as follows:

Job title - MILWAUKEE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

- 1, footing and sewers
- 2, plan of basement
- 3, " " first story
- 4, " " second story
- 5, " " third story
- 6, " " roof

- 7, Grand Ave. elevation (Wisconsin Ave.)
- 8, 8th and 8th Street elevations
- 9, north elevation and section looking west
- 10, sections looking east and north
- 11, heating and lighting plan on footing plan
- 12, " " " " " basement "
- 13, " " " " " first story
- 14, " " " " " second story
- 15, " " " " " third story
- 16, fans for Library and Museum and boiler section
- 17, missing; probably basement framing
- 18, framing of first floor
- 19, framing of second floor
- 20, " " third "
- 21, framing of roof
- 22, " " " over room 230 (delivery room)
- 23, " " " " rotunda and inner dome
- 24, " " dome details
- 51, center of Grand Ave. elevation
- 52, west end of " " "
- 53, missing; possibly elevation or section of museum
- 54, section thru library east wing looking north
- 55, sections thru library delivery room
- 56, " " rotunda looking south and north
- 57, " " " " east
- 58, rotunda ceiling and roof plans
- 59, section thru west stair looking east
- 60, sections " east " " "
- 61, " thru east library wing looking east
- 62, interior elevations and sections of library areas
- 63, rotunda floor mosaic pattern
- 64, west end of Grand Ave. elevation jointing and ornament for stone facing

6. Alterations and additions: The Public Library and Museum when first completed was a U-shaped building three stories (plus basement) in height, its south wing, facing Grand (now Wisconsin) Avenue, forming the "base" of the U, its sixteen-bay west wing, on Ninth Street, and ten-bay east wing, on Eighth, composing the "uprights." Within the courtyard defined by these sections was a small single-story U-shaped structure adjoining the south wing. Additional construction and alterations carried out in this century have left only vestiges of both court and one-story section, have extended the building north to West Wells Street, and have significantly modified most interior spaces. Fortunately, the magnificent entrance rotunda in the south wing and the marble staircases east and west of this impressive, domed space have escaped extensive remodelling, as have corridors, vestibules, and galleries on east, north, and west sides of the rotunda, corridors on all levels in the east section of the south wing, the east rooms of the first-floor suite now occupied by Goethe House (near the east end, south wing), and the Board Room, located on the first floor in the southeast corner of the building. On the exterior, east, south, and west elevations remain largely intact: in 1902 the elaborate bronze electroliers flanking the main (south) entrance were set in place (these were donated by Judge James M. Pereles), and, more recently, glass doors were installed in south and east entries; but beyond such minor changes and the inevitable weathering and darkening of the stone walls over the years, the street facades look much as they did when the edifice opened. At that time, as we have seen, the west end of the building contained the Public Museum, the east end and the single-story structure adjoining the south wing the Public Library. Today the Central Public Library occupies the entire structure, original fabric and additions, except first and upper floors of the west wing which presently house municipal offices. The Public Museum is now quartered in a new building nearby. Alterations and additions to the structure that library and museum shared for more than sixty years have been as follows:

- a. In 1909-12 a Bedford stone and brick addition six bays wide (north-south) was erected on the north end of the east wing, and east and west wings were joined on the north, the building thus becoming a hollow rectangle, with the single-story section remaining inside the enclosed court. The building permit, No. 1506, dated August 16, 1909, identifies Ferry & Clas as the architects, Fred W. Taddey & Son as the mason

contractor, and gives the addition's estimated cost as \$250,000. On file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings are prints of thirty-three drawings from the Ferry & Clas firm relating to this project, which also involved alterations to the original fabric, and prints of drawings dated 1909-11 from the Milwaukee Bridge Co., contractors for the structural iron and steel work.

- b. Within a year after completion of the first addition, which accommodated expanded museum facilities, work on a second addition, designed primarily to increase library space, was under way. In 1913-14 two floors were added to the single-story section, which was further enlarged by additional construction on the north and connected to the east wing by a third-floor overpass. Erected at the cost of \$62,000, the addition was designed by Milwaukee architects Henry Van Ryn and Gerrit De Gelleke. According to the "Proceedings" of the Library's Board of Trustees, the contractors included F. G. Riesen (Paul Riesen's Sons), Harry Sohns, Charles J. Fox, George F. Rohn, and the Art Metal Construction Co. Prints of thirteen of the Van Ryn & De Gelleke drawings are preserved at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, and the permit, No. 5503, issued in November 1913, is on file at the General Office, Building Inspection, 1010 Municipal Building.
- c. Permit No. 19646, October 1, 1930, signed by the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, documents construction of a fourth-floor penthouse, finished early in 1931.
- d. The later 1930's and the 1940's brought remodelling but little new construction. Permits Nos. 2165, 2243-2245, 10476, 1293, and 14719, dated June 1936 through May 1948, record the former, while Permit No. 12284, July 7, 1938, issued to the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, describes a small, single-story wing added at the rear (north end) of the fabric in 1938-39. Prints and microfilms of drawings from these years are in the files of the Bureau and the City Records Center, B-1 Municipal Building.
- e. During the 1950's remodelling of the interior continued. This decade also saw additional construction in the central area, which, as noted, had been altered and enlarged in 1913-14, and construction of the last

major addition--the \$2,000,000 library wing adjoining the north end of the existing building and bounded by Eighth and Ninth streets on east and west and by West Wells Street on the north. Chief permits for the north wing are Nos. 78744A and 79870A, dated June 1954. Milwaukee architects Herbert J. Grassold and Elmer A. Johnson drew the plans; the Siesel Construction Co. was the principal contractor. Ground-breaking ceremonies took place on June 10, 1954, and by February 2, 1957, according to an inspector's notes, the work had been completed and approved. Microfilms of drawings for the project (fifty-seven sheets) are on file at the City Records Center.

- f. The new Milwaukee Public Museum at 800 West Wells Street opened in 1963, and as the museum has vacated its quarters in the old building, these areas have been remodelled--rooms on the east side for the Central Library, spaces in the west wing (the museum's original headquarters) for various city departments. As mentioned, the latter remodelling is still in progress. Drawings, microfilms, and documents relating to this work are preserved at the various offices in the Municipal Building.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

- 1. Library and museum as public institutions were established in 1878 and 1882-83, respectively, by the Wisconsin legislature and the city's Common Council. Their histories, however, can be traced back a generation earlier. The Young Men's Association was organized in 1847, and it was this group's 10,000 volume library that became the nucleus of the Milwaukee Public Library. During the 1850s the Wisconsin Natural History Society began. The Society's collections and the efforts of their members established the groundwork for the Milwaukee Public Museum. Before completion of the Wisconsin Avenue building in 1898-99, the library had occupied rented suites in the Academy of Music Building and several downtown commercial blocks, while the museum had been housed in the Cerman-English Academy and the Exposition Building. Today, the structure erected for them contains only a part of the vast Milwaukee Public Library system, presently comprising, in addition to the Central Library, more than a dozen neighborhood libraries, three special libraries, and a bookmobile service. The new home of the Milwaukee Public Museum opened in 1963, and houses the offices and exhibition rooms of an institution that has become the fourth largest natural history museum and the largest municipally owned museum in the world.

2. The Joint Board of Trustees of the Public Library and Public Museum sponsored an architectural competition for a new public library in the fall of 1893. Announcements appeared in various newspapers and magazines and the Instructions to Architects stated that "the building should be of a pure style of architecture." The contest began in September and ended on November 15, 1893. The response was tremendous, surpassing the Trustees' expectations in every respect but one: they had hoped, the Evening Wisconsin reports, that Charles B. Atwood, designer of the celebrated Fine Arts Building at the Columbian Exposition, would enter. While Atwood never did enter the competition, seventy-four others did. These architects were from New York City, Brooklyn, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston, Atlanta, Denver, and Toronto as well as from midwestern communities. One young and comparatively inexperienced architect to participate was a twenty-six year old so little known that his name and address were given incorrectly in most contemporary accounts. On November 15, 1893 a Sentinel reporter wrote: "The only Milwaukee architect whose set of plans was received up to last night was Frank H. Wright." Aside from this notice and the appearance of his name on lists of entrants, Frank Lloyd Wright's design attracted no attention in the local papers.

Between November 16 and December 3, the Sentinel published twenty-six perspective views from the numerous entries. The Evening Wisconsin commented that, "One thing that impresses those who view the plans is the extraordinary effect of the World's Fair architecture on the designs. A majority of the architects have adopted some of the White City and one or two have almost adopted whole buildings." The drawings were exhibited from mid-November through December 2 at the Builders' Exchange. To assist them in selecting the best designs, the Trustees sought expert opinions from Professor J. M. Learned of Buffalo, New York, "president of the National Librarian's association" (Sentinel), Professor Brown Goode, "Curator of the National Museum of Washington" (Evening Wisconsin), and Professor William Robert Ware, an eminent architect and member of the faculty at Columbia College. Of these, only Professor Ware came to Milwaukee, arriving on December 8. He spent two days examining the entries and two evenings being feted by the German Journalists' Club and local architects. Refusing interviews and leaving "no hint as to which he selected as the best plans" (Evening Wisconsin), Ware returned to New York City on December 11. Several weeks of suspense and speculation ensued while the Trustees awaited his report.

On December 23 the Ware report arrived. It was a carefully written study of the five designs judged most successful. After considerable pressure from the press, the report was made public, and the five finalists were identified. These were Ferry and Clas, H. C. Koch and Co. of Milwaukee, Nettleton & Kahn (George Nettleton and Albert Kahn) of Detroit, Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul (Robert Day Andrews, Herbert Jacques, Augustus Neal Rantoul) of Boston, and Boring & Tilton (William A. Boring and Edward L. Tilton) of New York City. Amid protests of non-finalists, who demanded hearings and signed a denunciation of Ware's report, the Trustees continued their deliberations and narrowed the field to the two local firms. On January 4, 1894 the Trustees voted nine to six in favor of the Ferry and Clas proposal, which Ware had called "one of the best, if not the best of them all, elegant and sufficiently dignified, and a great improvement upon the library at the University of Leipzig, Germany, which it notably resembles." Runner-up Koch took his defeat angrily, declining the \$500 prize and seeking an injunction to prevent the city from paying competition expenses. Koch's actions and the envy of their colleagues soon proved to be the least of Ferry and Clas' problems. When time came to sign their contract, the city reneged on the promised five percent commission. Ferry and Clas refused to accept the amount offered. It was not until late the following fall that a compromise was finally reached and work on plans and specifications got underway.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: In the collections of the Local History Room, Central Library, and the Milwaukee County Historical Society are early photographs of the exterior. The latter collection includes, also, two photos of the building under construction as well as old views of library and museum interiors.
2. Bibliography:
  - a. Primary and unpublished sources: In 1939-40 personnel of the P. & S. Division, Works Projects Administration, prepared reports on a number of Milwaukee's public buildings, including the Public Library and Museum. Although this paper is neither as thoroughgoing nor as accurate as the Works Projects Administration coverage of City Hall (WIS-259), it is, nonetheless, a valuable source, containing, among other items, a brief historical sketch, copies of documents pertaining to

purchase of the site, the relevant Common Council "Proceedings," and a list of contractors and expenses for the original fabric. Two typewritten copies, bound with reports on the Auditorium and the Incinerator Plant, are on file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings; an abridged version is in the collection of the Municipal Reference Library in City Hall.

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Interview with Allan G. Wallsworth, City Architect, Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, August 24, 1970.

Interview with Kathleen Williams, Municipal Reference Library, City Hall, November 11, 1970.

Interviews with Fern Jensen, Milwaukee Public Library, September 21 and November 11, 1970.

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b. Secondary and published sources:

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"Chicago," The American Architect and Building News, XLIII, January 20, 1894, 32.

"The Children's Room," Evening Wisconsin, February 13, 1894, 3.

"Children's Room at Public Library," Milwaukee Sentinel, October 2, 1898, Section 2, 5.

"Clothed in Secrecy," Milwaukee Sentinel, December 28, 1893, 3.

"Contract is Signed," Milwaukee Sentinel, October 3, 1895, 4.

"Covered Up the Names," Milwaukee Sentinel, December 9, 1893, 5.

"Designed for Greeks," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 26, 1893, 15.

"Discuss Building Plans," Milwaukee Sentinel, March 5, 1895, 4.

Doerflinger, Charles H., "Natural History Society, the Public Museum and Their History," Milwaukee Sentinel, January 22, 1899, Section 2, 2-3.

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"Extras Are Illegal," Evening Wisconsin, November 13, 1895, 1.

"Ferry & Clas Ahead," Milwaukee Journal, January 4, 1894, 1.

"Ferry and Clas Win," Milwaukee Journal, January 5, 1894, 2.

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Ferry & Clas and Charles D. Armstrong, Specifications for an Electric Lighting and Power Plant for the Public Library and Public Museum Building in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, 1898.

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"It Will Do No Good," Evening Wisconsin, December 28, 1893, 1.

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"Koch Refuses to Sell," Evening Wisconsin, January 9, 1894, 1.

- "Koch Will Appeal," Evening Wisconsin, February 17, 1894, 11.
- "Koch's Last Injunction," Evening Wisconsin, February 14, 1894, 1.
- "Left No Report," Evening Wisconsin, December 11, 1893, 3.
- "Library Fight Ended," Evening Wisconsin, February 15, 1894, 3.
- "Library-Museum," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 16, 1893, 1.
- "The Library-Museum," Milwaukee Sentinel, December 3, 1893, 22.
- "Library-Museum Plans," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 18, 1893, 3.
- "Library Opens To-Day," Milwaukee Sentinel, October 3, 1898, 3.
- "Library Plan Chosen," Evening Wisconsin, January 5, 1894, 3.
- "Many Bad Floor Plans," Evening Wisconsin, November 17, 1893, 3.
- "Many Plans Are Out," Evening Wisconsin, December 9, 1893, 11.

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"Mystery About the Plans," Milwaukee Sentinel,  
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"Narrowed Down to Two," Evening Wisconsin, December  
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"No Longer a Secret," Evening Wisconsin, December  
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3. Potential sources not consulted: Lengthy though the foregoing bibliography has been, it is scarcely exhaustive. Remaining to be studied are other documents preserved in the Manuscripts Division of the Milwaukee Public Library, Dankmar Adler's report, "Proceedings" of the Board of Trustees of Public Library and Public Museum beyond the few cited above, other newspaper stories and publications of the 1890's and later, and the like.

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November 28, 1970

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Public Library and Museum, thoroughly classical in style and spirit, was based upon Italian and French Renaissance prototypes; more specifically, the building's south facade shares the five-part composition and general exterior massing of Claude Perrault's east front of the Louvre (1667-70).
2. Condition of fabric: Very good

B. Description of Exterior (original fabric only):

1. Over-all dimensions: Three wings--south, east, and west--with three stories plus basement. A central wing, one story plus basement, is perpendicular to the south wing. The south (front) elevation, with central and end pavilions, measures 293 feet (east-west). The east elevation extends for ten bays and measures 149 feet (north-south). The west facade is composed of sixteen bays and measures 228 feet (north-south). Both east and west elevations have slightly projecting pavilions at each end. Above the plain basement walls and a striated first floor, the south, west and east elevations are dominated by monumental engaged Corinthian columns and pilasters, which carry a full entablature surmounted by a balustrade. Centered above the main entrance is a low dome flanked by terracotta eagles.
2. Foundations: Limestone foundation walls with concrete footings. The interior columns have limestone footings as well.
3. Wall construction: Street facades are of light grey Bedford (Indiana) limestone with Bedford stone and terracotta trim; court walls above sills of basement windows are brick; interior framing is of iron and steel.
4. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: In the center pavilion, south facade, on the first story, is the main entrance, which consists of three arched doorways equipped until very recently with heavy glass double doors (not original). There is also a pedimented entrance, with a rectangular metal and glass double door (not original), on grade, near the south end of the east elevation.
  - b. Windows: A typical bay of south, west, and east elevations presents this arrangement: on basement level, a simple small rectangular window; in the first story, a rectangular unit with rectangular transom; second floor, a rectangular double-hung one-over-one unit flanked by colonettes and surmounted by a semi-circular transom; third story, a two-panel rectangular window. Deviations from this pattern occur in the central bays of end pavilions, where the norm becomes a triple rectangular window with rectangular transoms on the first story, a Palladian window on

the second, and a three-panel rectangular unit on the third, and in the center pavilion, south elevation, where there are doorways in the first story, as noted, and circular windows on third story level.

5. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: Main roof is flat, with tar covering (the original skylights have been removed); the central dome is clad with terra-cotta tiles.
- b. Framing: Steel
- c. Cornice and eaves: Bedford limestone and terra cotta.

6. Stairways: In front of the building, at the first story level, is a platform extending most of the width of the facade (between east and west pavilions), and there are three granite staircases joining grade and platform--at east end, west end, and center.

C. Description of Interior (original fabric):

1. Floor plans: Originally, the Public Library and Museum took the form of an asymmetrical U, with a small one-story U-shaped section adjoining the south wing and projecting north into the courtyard defined by the three principal wings. Both the single-story portion and the east wing have been very significantly altered by later additions and remodelling. Plans of south and west wings, however, remain relatively unchanged. Occupying the central area of the south wing is the lofty, domed entrance rotunda. Along three sides of this space, on second and third floors, are galleries, and on east and west sides are broad staircases connecting all levels of the building. Corridors east and west of the rotunda in the south wing give access to the various rooms and suites in this section and to east and west wings. On all levels the latter consists of large, essentially unpartitioned spaces. On basement level the west wing now serves as the warehouse of the Library for the Blind; upper stories, along with the west end of the south wing, once the museum's headquarters, have undergone remodelling--installation of new flooring, partitions, lowered ceilings, and the like. At present the west end of the south wing, basement story, contains the library's Supply Room, and the east end houses such facilities as the Records Room and Documents Room (basement level), Goethe House (the German-American Cultural Institute) and the original Board Room, both on

the first story. In the original east wing are the areas occupied until lately by the Local History Room (first floor), the library's administrative offices and Board of Trustees headquarters (second floor), data processing department and cataloguers' department (third floor). Today a vestibule, library registration desk, and return counter occupy the single story structure adjacent to south wing.

2. Stairways: The principal staircases, east and west of the rotunda, join basement through third floors. Treads, risers, balusters, handrails, and wainscot all are marble. Floors of landings are mosaic tile; ceilings are plaster, coffered and embellished with inset plaster rosettes. In the east wing is a third staircase connecting all levels of the building, this one having ornamental iron balusters and newels, slate treads, and wooden handrails. Lastly, there is a marble staircase (five risers), with oak wainscot and metal handrails (not original), joining the east corridor, south wing, basement level, and the doorway on grade.
3. Flooring: In many areas the original flooring was maple (laid on wooden sub-flooring over concrete), but it appears that most, if not all, of these wooden floors have been removed; and in remodelled areas soft tile is now predominant. Happily, the most beautiful of the original floors have not been replaced; the rotunda still boasts the exquisite multi-colored mosaic tile composition designed by Ferry & Clas; and the mosaic floors of galleries, landings of the main staircases, corridors on first through third stories, south wing, and the Board Room also are largely intact. Finally, it may be noted that there are ceramic tile floors in the restrooms and red quarry tile floors in basement vestibules and corridors of the south wing.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: In the rotunda, there are scagliola piers and pilasters with gilded capitals on first and second stories. Marble balustrades are present along the second and third floor galleries, and marble wainscots are used throughout. Cornices and moldings are executed in stucco, staff, and plaster. The coffered dome has inset plaster rosettes. Other ceilings in the rotunda are similarly treated. The corridors of the south wing are panelled with an oak wainscot. On the first through third floors the plaster walls are punctuated by regularly spaced pilasters, topped with richly molded cornices, and also have coffered ceilings with plaster ornament above the light fixtures. The remodelled areas have plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings.

5. Doorways and doors: Doorways in the rotunda are arched openings, and in a few of these the decorative fanlights remain. Most of the original doors have been replaced. Those that do remain in this area, in the corridors, and elsewhere are panelled rectangular units. Typically, the doors in the south wing are set in doorways having shouldered architrave trim, a number of them embellished with elaborately carved and molded cornices or entablatures.
6. Trim: Wood (oak, birch, mahogany, pine) and marble (Siena, Numidian, Tennessee)
7. Hardware: Brass
8. Lighting: Electric. In the rotunda and corridors of the south wing many of the original fixtures survive. Of special interest are those on the first story of the rotunda--sumptuous chandeliers of brass and stained glass.
9. Heating: City heat

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Facing south, the building now occupies the entire block bounded by West Wisconsin Avenue on the south, West Wells Street on the north, North Eighth and North Ninth streets on east and west.
2. Historic landscape design: A stone balustrade with iron gates at the east and west ends encloses the first story platform on the south side of the building. Small lawns are also located on the east and west sides of the paved central area of this platform.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1970 Milwaukee Project under the sponsorship of the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission of the City of Milwaukee--Richard W. E. Perrin, Chairman--and were donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. This project was the continuation of a program to record the historic architecture of Milwaukee begun in 1969, under the joint sponsorship of the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission and the Historic American Buildings Survey, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The project team included architect John Thiel of Milwaukee; architectural historian Mary Ellen Wietczykowski--now Mary Ellen Young--(Milwaukee Landmarks Commission); and photographer Douglas Creen. The data was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS editors Carolyn Heath, Mary Farrell, Candace Reed, and Philip Hamp.

ADDENDUM TO:  
PUBLIC LIBRARY & MUSEUM  
814 West Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee  
Milwaukee  
Wisconsin

HABS WI-270  
*WIS, 40-MILWA, 34-*

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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